

Mr. Speaker,

This is Military Appreciation Month, so it is appropriate that on the floor of this House earlier this week Members of Congress stood up and showed their support with their words for our troops. Today, we can do something even more important; we can support our military troops and their families with our deeds. That is exactly what the \$3.2 billion in military construction in this bill does in four ways.

First, it includes \$488 million, the same as the President's request, for five wounded warrior complexes for the Army and two complexes for the Marine Corps. These facilities support many of our most severely wounded combat troops and their families through their important recovery and healing process.

Second, this bill includes \$276 million, also the same as the President's request, for 25 child development centers at Department of Defense installations.

These funds will provide additional child care for 5,000 military children, a high priority for our military families, especially with so many parents serving our Nation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Third, the bill adds an additional \$1 billion for Department of Defense hospital construction. Why? Because many of our military hospitals are riddled with aging inadequate structures that do not meet current standards for medical care. This is unacceptable in time of peace and unconscionable in time of war.

No Member of this Congress, no Member of the Senate, no citizen of America should want to see a return to the Walter Reed Annex 18 of several years ago when Army soldiers had to live in such deplorable conditions.

The funds in this bill would bring our total investment in military hospitals over the past year to

\$3.3 billion. This House will initiate the funding to modernize our DOD hospital for our troops.

Fourth, this bill includes more funds for troop housing in Afghanistan. The President's request for projects in the CENTCOM area of responsibility total \$876 million, including \$84 million to partially fund the foundation and utility work needed to house additional U.S. troops going to Afghanistan. This bill supports 98 percent of the request and includes an additional \$214 million to fully fund the troop housing requirement in Afghanistan.

Finally I'd mention that this bill includes \$263 million, the same as the President's request, once again, to accelerate and enhance the construction of new DOD hospitals in Bethesda and Fort Belvoir to replace the aging Walter Reed.

By voting for this bill, we can support our troops and their families with our deeds, not just our words. I urge our colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill.